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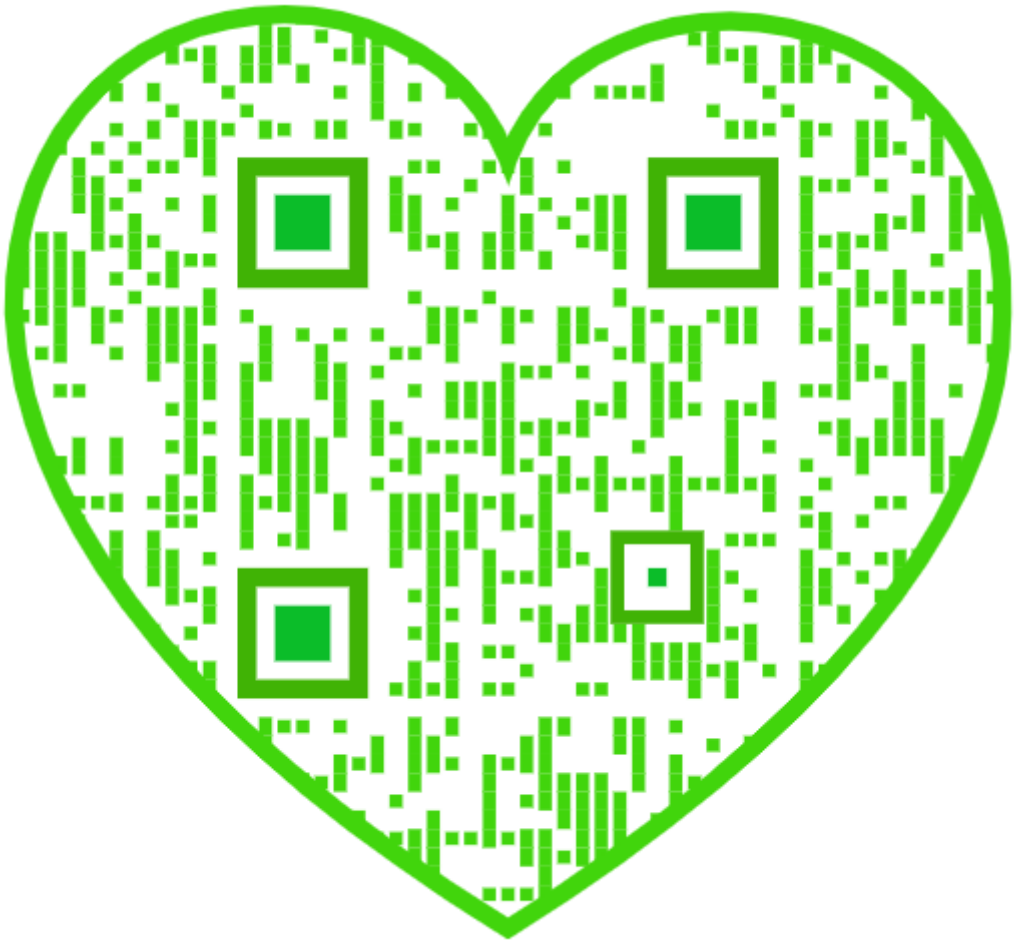

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Adult Bible Classes and How to Conduct Them

by

IRVING F. WOOD
AND
NEWTON M. HALL

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ADULT BIBLE CLASSES

AND HOW TO CONDUCT THEM

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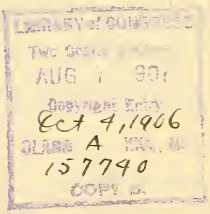

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CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
	Preface	V
I.	The Forgotten Class	1
II.	When Starting a New Class	11
III.	Who Should Teach the Class?	17
IV.	The Minister and the Class	23
V.	The Tools and the Workshop	27
VI.	Things Outside the Lesson	31
VII.	How to Question in an Adult Class	35
VIII.	How May a Silent Class be made to ask Questions?	41
IX.	The Formal Address as a Method of Teaching	47
X.	The Class and Modern Scholarship	53
XI.	Extra-Biblical Studies	59
XII.	Bible Study for Clubs	65
	Appendix	
	Study of the Books of the Bible	75
	Biographical Study	81
	Study of the Bible by Chapters	89
	A List of Other Studies Available in Pamphlet Form	95

PREFACE

This book is the outcome of a dozen years of teaching and study on the part of its authors. Entering a field in which literature is almost wholly lacking, it is in certain respects a pioneer.

Our work aims to do two things: To discuss in some measure certain of the great problems of the adult class, and to present a collection of lessons, many of which have been used with classes. They have purposely been chosen from a variety of subjects and with a variety of forms, for they are designed not only to furnish outlines which classes may in some cases use, but to suggest subjects and methods which classes may work up for themselves. The authors believe that a suggested outline, worked out by a class or a leader with special reference to the needs of that particular group of people, will often be of far more value than any fully prepared scheme of study adopted bodily. We have not hesitated, therefore, to include a few such outline courses. At the same time, we have put in a number of courses more fully worked out, which may be taken up by classes with as much or as little change as may be desired.

We do not wish the book, because of its obvious suggestion of independent courses for the adult class, to be regarded as in any way antagonistic to the uniform lesson systems now in the field. The problem of

lesson systems is a large one. We believe it is to be solved by experiment rather than by controversy.

The chapter devoted to Club Study has been inserted because we recognize that the Sunday-school is not the only place where Bible study makes its appeal, and we would be glad to encourage that study in the many clubs that are seeking subjects of interest and profit.

The names of all the persons to whom the authors are indebted would make a long list. A number of the chapters were published in The Sunday School Times as a series of articles on The Adult Class. The chapter on The Modern Bible Study and The Adult Class appeared in The Biblical World, May, 1903. We are indebted to these journals for permission to reprint these articles. The lesson courses accompanying the book as separate pamphlets are a selection made by the Editorial Board of The Pilgrim Press from a larger number presented. We wish to acknowledge our obligation to Rev. H. L. Wriston, Rev. Edward M. Noyes and Prof. H. M. Burr for permission to use the courses we have incorporated in the pamphlet publications. The book and the courses owe much to a wide correspondence with persons engaged in adult class work.

We wish here to express our gratitude, not only to those whose courses we used, but to many others, for courteous and often painstaking answers to our inquiries.

We send out this book, hoping that it will be of some assistance to the great army of our fellow students of the Word and work of God.

Adult Bible Classes

ADULT BIBLE CLASSES

Chapter I

THE FORGOTTEN CLASS

FEW subjects have been more fruitful of literature, during recent years, than the Sunday-school. It is all the more surprising, then, that there is very little, indeed, published regarding adult classes. Most Sunday-school books are innocent of any suggestion that there is such a thing as Bible Study for adults. A very few pages would suffice to reprint all that has appeared in book form on the subject. Sunday-school journals give slightly more attention to the subject, but even there it is pitiably inadequate. Nowhere is the attention devoted to the subject at all in proportion to its importance. In fact, it might be interesting to speculate as to whether some curious scholar, studying in future centuries the history of the Sunday-school movement on the basis of its present literature, might not raise the question whether the adult class had more than a sporadic existence in the American Sunday-school at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The reason for this neglect of the adult class is apparent. The Sunday-school has been "the nursery of the church." Attention has been concentrated upon

the little children. It is interesting to notice how the improvements of the Sunday-school have been most marked in the kindergarten and primary grades. Every one interested in Sunday-school work rejoices that it is so. But, meantime, the adult class has been almost forgotten. Patiently, obscurely, with little aid from any quarter, it has gone on its way, doing the best it could. Is it any wonder that it has not always succeeded, that its methods and its work have not always been worthy of the highest commendation? Is it strange that it is so seldom attractive, not in any cheap way, but in a large, manly, Christian way; or that when it is attractive, the attraction comes from the personality of the teacher, and is not of a sort which one school can borrow from another? It is to be feared that the implications involved in these questions are true. But even if they are to the fullest extent true, the discredit is not to be laid at the door of the classes which already exist. The only wonder is that under the circumstances, they are as good as they are. The discredit, if there is any, belongs to the whole situation. And yet, perhaps "discredit" is not the proper word. The situation, unideal as it is, may be only the result of the deliberation of healthy growth. We suspect that here, as in certain other departments of life, patience with the processes of growth is a part of the Christian discipline of life.

If the growth is to be normal, however, there must be very much increase of attention to the adult class. It is a common saying among educators that educational influence works from above downward. In-

crease of excellence in the higher grades lifts up the lower. In the Sunday-school this natural method of advance has been reversed. This is perhaps the only educational department in the civilized world where the highest grades are notably poorer in equipment and method than the lower. Many a church has a Sunday-school of which it is proud. The visitor, seeking to find the excellence of the school, is shown elaborate primary rooms, with abundant apparatus and skilled and enthusiastic teachers. This is the "show part" of the Sunday-school. The equipment and teaching in the Junior Department are described as fairly good. Two or three classes suffice for the dwindling Senior Department. The visitor finds that they have little attention and less equipment, and are "no better than they ought to be." If he is courageous enough to inquire for adult classes, he may find one or two thinly attended classes of patient and long-suffering people, who are there somewhat out of a sense of duty, and who, to speak plainly, are often "puttering" with something that is really unworthy of their intellectual caliber. As to serious planning for their special needs, or providing material equipment for their use, nobody ever did it, or, what is worse, ever supposed that they were neglecting duty by not doing it. If the pastor will add to his multifarious duties that of teaching an adult class, or if any other specially prepared person will do so, it may have good success for a time, but largely because of special stimulus, not because the Sunday-school has fostered and nourished it as an essential part of necessary work. It is not too much to

say that the adult class has been the neglected element in the modern Sunday-school. But this condition cannot be permanent and the Sunday-school maintain its proper place in religious life. Elsewhere in education the most advanced stages are found to be the most expensive in labor, equipment and careful planning. We are persuaded that the Sunday-school is not such an exception to the laws of educational method as the present situation would seem to imply. The disastrous effects of the present policy are already visible in the very grievous lack of trained teachers for all grades of Sunday-school work. Such teachers ought to be the natural products of well-equipped senior and adult classes. Because we do not have enough of them, our Sunday-schools, excellent as they are in many respects, are in some danger of drying up at the roots. Nine-tenths of the very serious problems of teachers would disappear without further notice if we only had adequate senior and adult classes.

It is difficult to tell which of the problems is most pressing, the problem of teachers or of Sunday-school graduation. To solve the first would go far toward solving the second, for perhaps more often than for any other reason, the boy or girl drops out of the Sunday-school because the personality and methods of the teacher fail to keep pace with the changing needs of growing youth; and so the boy or girl leaves the Sunday-school with an unpleasant memory freshest in mind, and ever after is no friend of the Sunday-school, or only a grudging friend from a sense of duty. More direct still, however, is the relation between the adult

class and the problem of graduation. It is the relation of example. If the older boys and girls see that the adult classes are not attractive to their elders and are not prized by them, no one need complain if, as soon as they consider themselves no longer children, they, too, are restless to leave the Sunday-school. They consider it as only for the little ones, and every instinct of awakening adolescent life makes them ashamed to be associated longer with children's things. The feeling is right. It is not to be condemned. If the Sunday-school suffers because of it, the suffering is due to the senseless stupidity of the Sunday-school, not to any badness in the youth. Only one thing will ever place the Sunday-school in such a position that it will not be a perfectly sensible, proper thing for a youth at the age of adolescence to get out of it. That is, to develop strong, virile, intellectually respectable senior and adult classes, so large in size and so well recognized in the structure of the school that they will command respect in the classes of the lower grades. Many a teacher of the older children, faithful, well-equipped, doing work that ought to win the loyal regard of her class, is disheartened and saddened because her scholars leave the school in spite of all she can do, when the whole difficulty is that there is no adequate adult work in the school. The Sunday-school too often compels its best teachers to suffer vicariously for the sins of its general management; and so in this field also we once more learn that we are all members one of another.

It surely is not necessary to insist on the value of adult classes for the sake of their own members. Never before was there such a field of study for them as there is now. New light has been thrown on the Bible from all sides. A new recognition of the value of the Bible as literature has come in the last few years. Exploration and archeology have added their contributions to its interest. New applications of its principles to the present are demanded by the new conditions of modern life. The Bible and its interpretation have taken on significances of wonderful interest and importance. Now, there is no place where all this can be studied and discussed so safely, so freely and with so much practical profit as in a wisely conducted adult class. Then, outside the Bible, there is a large field of Christian life, personal and civic, which ought to be carefully considered by the Christian Church, with all the wisdom, moderation and frankness that the Church can bring. Only by such consideration can these problems be fairly met by the Church. The adult class furnishes the best place the Church has yet provided for their discussion. The fact is that the adult class is a machine for the molding of Christian public opinion whose value and power we have not yet begun to appreciate or to use. It requires no prophet to predict that the future will see a development of it far beyond any position which it has yet attained.

That the adult class has problems of its own, every thoughtful Sunday-school worker must see. The following chapters try to consider, though very briefly, some of these problems. They are practical, not aca-

demic, problems. They are concerned with the question of how to bring things to pass. They all sum themselves up in one: How to make the best and most useful class in any given Sunday-school. Such a problem is never answered by any set of rules. Conditions differ. The personnel of class and teacher are factors in the case. What is good for one school will not do in another. Principles and methods can be discussed in a book, but the application of details must be made by plain common sense.

There is one question, however, which ought to be considered as primary to any discussion of the practical problems of the class. It is this: What ought a Sunday-school to regard as its ideal in the way of adult classes? What is their object? How many should there be? What is the tone and spirit which should pervade them?

Of all departments of the Sunday-school, the adult class is least amenable to rules. The personal equation must always be taken into account. Classes must be formed to suit the tastes and needs of the persons concerned. Whether classes should be few or many must be determined entirely by the groups of people who may want them. Classes cannot be laid upon Procrustean beds. One group may want one thing and another group another. Very well, let them have what they want. The class exists for the members, not the members for the class. In fact, nothing would be better for the adult work of a school than for a group of people to come to the superintendent and say, "We want to study such and such a subject. May we study

it as a part of the Sunday-school? Perhaps others also would like to join us."

If the ideal number of classes is so variable and adaptive it follows naturally that the ideal object of the classes is also a matter of adaptation. No one object is large enough to suit all the adult classes that a Sunday-school may properly contain. One may have for its object careful Bible study, another the consideration of social questions, still another may subordinate study to the functions of fellowship and church work, and each be doing the best it can for the church with which it is connected. It is not wise for a school to say, "This one thing we do in our adult classes." Each class must be free to fix its own object. The aim of the school in its adult classes, then, should be to meet the needs of as many people as possible. The spirit must be one of large tolerance. One class may be very "liberal" and another very "conservative," one Biblical and another social, and the only unity of aim will be the greatest good to the greatest number. Group individualization is the watchword of adult class success. The adult department ought to be a school of electives with freedom of transfer from one to the other as courses change, and with a keen desire on the part of all classes to really accomplish something.

For a class must not merely mark time. If it is getting nowhere and its members gaining nothing, it ought to stop. There is no more virtue in wasting time in the Sunday-school than there is in wasting it anywhere else. To meet the special needs of special

classes, to gain something worth gaining, to make a Christian use of God's gift of intellect—these ought to be the general aims of a school in its adult classes.

All this implies the probable use of more than one course of study. The uniform lesson system has its advantages. It unifies the school in a way which is sometimes very useful. But it is not to be made an idol. Often it may be broken over to advantage in any department of the school, and nowhere more often than in the adult class. If a class wants to do a special piece of work, the uniform lesson system should never be allowed to stand in the way. So long as it is an aid, use it. When it blocks the wheels of progress, let it go. Here again the system exists for the person, not the person for the system.

Chapter II

WHEN STARTING A NEW CLASS

No two churches are exactly alike. Specific directions as to any sort of church work would only fit one set of conditions. There are, however, certain general requirements which must be met in the starting of all classes, and it is with these that we are concerned.

The first thing to be done is to ensure a nucleus. A class must depend for its success on one of two things: it must either have a group of people so interested in it that they will carry it through, or it must depend upon the personal attraction of the teacher. Of these two the first is by far the most stable. The especially attractive teacher is not always to be had, and even when he is, the nucleus is essential for his really efficient work. A class that depends solely for its being upon its teacher is like a church that exists only because of its preacher.

A good class is to be a permanent body. It will not be in too much of a hurry to begin. To throw down this book and say, "Next Sunday I will start a class," may begin a good class, but it is much more liable to begin a fiasco. Quiet planning for a few weeks or months is more likely to result in success.

Probably more classes fail because of general vagueness than for any other reason. Your class is to study

the Bible; but the Bible is a large subject, and the term conveys a rather indefinite notion to most people. Many would not be particularly interested in the proposition to join a class for Bible study who would be glad to study Acts, or John, or the Book of Job. The class must actually do its work on some definite part of the Bible. Why not make a definite plan? A Bible class must be differentiated sharply, in the formation of its plan, from a social club. The social club has its reason for being in the good-fellowship of its members. The question of what its program shall be is a secondary consideration. This is not the case with the Bible class. Its attraction lies in its program, and that will be more attractive if made somewhat definite.

Although a Bible class should be a permanent institution, it does not follow that the particular Bible class you start must of necessity be permanent. In fact, a class will often be much easier to start, and much more successful, if it is limited in time. Many a busy person will find time to study Acts for three months who would hesitate to mortgage an indefinite future to Bible study. Such a plan will hold a class to definite progress by the feeling that so much ground is to be covered in so much time. It gives opportunity for some change of personnel with the close of one course, even if another immediately begins, without the friction which might otherwise arise. There is no disgrace in a Bible class for a definite course which shall then stop. Another one next year may be its outcome.

A Bible class must have endurable conditions. It cannot do work when set in the midst of confusion.

Every part of the class must be able to hear what is said in every other part. It needs the entire time of the Sunday-school for the lesson in hand. The opening and closing exercises of the average Sunday-school, not to speak of occasional addresses appropriate enough for the school, are a stumbling-block to the earnest adult class that wants to spend its time in Bible study. How far these conditions can, if necessary, be sacrificed, each class must decide for itself; but every class has its own threshold of convenience, below which it is impossible to fall and make the work worth doing. In all other things we recognize that there is a limit at which we can say that, if the work is not done better than this, it had better not be done at all. Many people seem to suppose that there is no such limit in Bible teaching; that it is better to do it somehow, no matter how poorly or under what conditions, than not to do it at all. This is not true of adult Bible teaching, whatever may be the case with other grades. A class working below the limit of endurable conditions becomes a hindrance to Bible study.

Suppose, now, we have ensured a nucleus, a definite plan, and endurable conditions, how shall the class actually be started?

There are only two ways of starting anything. One is to begin large, with all the prestige and influence and numbers which can be gathered; to "start off well." The other is to begin modestly, with only the people who are really interested, and to allow it to grow by its own merits. Which is the fitting way to begin a Bible class?

The first method is appropriate to a movement that must command a speedy and wide-spread interest for its success, or that depends on the popularity of a single event. It is a good plan for a county fair. But these are not the conditions of success in a Bible class. That demands genuine personal interest in its work, some homogeneity of spirit, and may be expected to grow quietly and more by natural selective process than by public advertising. The second method of beginning is much more appropriate to it. A Bible class belongs to the category of movements of thought, and all such movements are hindered more than helped by extravagant or artificial popular interest in their beginnings.

Yet the temptations in this matter are very great. Let us put the warnings against them in a series of "don'ts."

Don't think you must "start big."

Don't let any one else think that if you do not "start big" you fail.

Don't try to get everybody in. Some good people will never want to join a Bible class. Do not judge them as lacking interest in the Bible. They may be getting quite as much out of it in some other way.

Don't try to appeal to everybody. If you do, your appeal will be too indefinite to be forceful with any one. One advantage of a limited plan is that it makes a definite appeal to a certain interest.

Don't let your pastor, in announcing the class, urge "everybody to come." You do not want everybody.

You want those interested in a particular section of Bible study.

Don't set your ideal in numbers. Make the class the most profitable Bible study that its members ever came in contact with, and it will win its own proper constituency.

Chapter III

WHO SHOULD TEACH THE CLASS

Who shall teach the Bible class? The best person that can be found. But how discover the best person? By what marks may he be known? That is a more difficult question to answer. After all, the only sure test of a teacher lies in the teaching. The qualities which make up a good teacher are capable of such a variety of combinations that it is quite impossible to say beforehand, with perfect assurance, whether any person will succeed or not as a teacher. Still, there are certain qualities which are essential to the success of a teacher of a Bible class.

1. He must be a person whose judgment the class will respect. A Bible class, if it does worthy work, will find itself in contact with subjects of difficulty and delicacy. Sometimes it will glance at them and pass on; sometimes it will discuss them frankly and fully. To do either wisely requires judgment, and the class must have confidence in that judgment. The primary requisite of successful teaching in any volunteer class is rapport between teacher and class.

2. He must be a person of broad sympathies. The Bible class will probably include people of different ways of thinking. It certainly ought to put before its

members different views on many subjects. Its teacher must be sympathetic with all honest efforts to find the truth. Next to confidence in the teacher's judgment, a class must have confidence in the teacher's fairness; and, many character sketches in literature to the contrary notwithstanding, genuine fairness is impossible without sympathy.

3. He must be a person who knows how to learn. The man who has got through doing his thinking, who has all his ideas nicely wrapped up and laid away on their shelves, to be taken down and exhibited on occasion, is not the man to teach the Bible. The Bible is a subject for a lifelong progress in study. Many good people, who might otherwise be excellent Bible-class teachers, are hopelessly disqualified because they regard their ideas about the Bible as a closed system. They welcome new views on other subjects, but not on this. It is too bad, but such persons must be laid on the shelf along with their ideas. The Bible class has no use for their teaching, no matter how true their conceptions may be.

4. He must be a person who is interested in the Bible. I do not say who is a Biblical scholar, but one who is sufficiently interested in the Bible so that he can, in time, become a Biblical scholar. The present situation is rather peculiar. Some of the best candidates for Bible-class teachers are people who do not know very much about the Bible. They are intelligent Christian people of scholarly tastes, much interested in the Bible, but really, as they themselves say,

not knowing enough about it to be able to teach it. The question is not, therefore, What do they know now? but, What will their interest impel them to learn?

The presumption of good teaching will be against the person whose main qualification is the verbatim text knowledge of the Bible which was the ideal of the last generation. Unless counteracted by other influences, this knowledge will mean the closing of the door to other and more important knowledge.

I have not said that he must have the teaching instinct. It is true that he must have it, but how shall that be discovered without trial? I have not said that he must be spiritual in his interpretation of the Bible. If he has the teachableness of a true teacher, he will become spiritual; for few people can help others study the Bible without finding themselves drawn nearer to God. I have not said that he must know the Bible better than his class. That may be a matter of time. Not present knowledge, but spirit; not achievement, but possibilities, are to be looked for in searching for the best teacher.

The answer to the question "who" has, after all, been in terms of quality. So it must always be. There is no *ex-officio* test of a Bible-class teacher. He is not necessarily the pastor, nor a prominent Sunday-school worker, nor a pillar in the church. He may not be in the Sunday-school at all, and may be very much surprised when asked to teach. It is possible that "he" may be "she." Yet generally, other things being equal, it is better to have a man than a woman. The advanced work of the Sunday-school needs the mascu-

line element. Most churches have the proper man somewhere, but he is not always the first man who would come to the mind of the officers of the school. It is not always easy to find him. Wanted: A man to discover the Bible-class teacher.

But what can the Bible class do when no good teacher is available? There are hundreds of schools that are very much discouraged over the possibilities of a good Bible class. They have no teacher for it. Not only is there no expert Bible scholar at command, but there is no one who has both the leisure time and the requisite education to become a Bible scholar. If the success of the Bible class depends upon the possession of an adequately equipped teacher, their case is hopeless.

Is a teacher necessary? If the question concerned a class of children or young people in the formative stage, the answer could only be "Yes." The class could not proceed without a teacher, and if a good teacher could not be had, a poorer one must be used. The conditions of the adult class are different. Let us analyze the situation, and see what the teacher may do for such a class.

1. He may bring them knowledge. If he is an expert Bible student, that is his business. Still, the class can get along without it. They know something of the subject already. The work is not like learning a new language. They can, if necessary, pool their knowledge, and get along without the contribution of distinctly new knowledge by their teacher.

2. He may plan their work. Certainly the wise Bible class will get some plan of work. It will set before itself a few things that it will aim to get from the course of study, and not go blundering and stumbling about in the broad field of the International or any other lesson system without a definite and coherent plan.

But is it necessary that any one person should plan the work? How would it do, if there is no one person available, to put it in commission? Suppose three or four members of the class were appointed for the year to keep the work of the class well in hand and arranged a sufficient time previous. Really, a teacher is not necessary for this.

3. He may open up, by question, talk, or otherwise, the subject of each lesson. Usually, this is his main work. Very likely the chief difficulty is to find a person who can do this, for to do it well requires considerable teaching skill and a great deal of time in preparation.

But is it necessary that the same person should always open up the lesson? Why should not Mr. A—— do it one week and Miss B—— the next? It may be neither would have the time nor ability to prepare a fresh and interesting presentation of the lesson every week, and yet, if they knew it a month or two in advance, they might be able to make, for that one lesson, a preparation of which no one need be ashamed. It need not be a "paper." It might be a series of questions—anything to get the facts of the lesson before

the class. Meantime, how it would enrich, for the one who did it, the study of all the other lessons!

4. He may preside, and guide the discussion. This is, after all, the most important function of a teacher. It requires personality and tact to do it successfully, but it does not require Biblical knowledge. It may, perhaps, properly be objected that, if he does not teach, he should not be called a teacher. Very well; let him be called the chairman of the Bible class, or even the president of the Bible club. Thereby the whole difficulty is sometimes solved at a stroke. Many a church that cannot procure an expert Bible-class teacher can easily find an excellent Bible-club president.

If necessary, even he can be dispensed with. Plenty of clubs for the study of other subjects exist without skilled presidents. Any device that such clubs find practical the club for the study of the Bible will find practical. Class or club, what difference how we call it? Class emphasizes the teaching, club emphasizes the common interest in one subject. If we cannot have a Bible class with a good teacher, we can have a Bible club with no teacher, and we can do a great deal of very excellent work in it.

The Bible class can never afford to have a poor teacher, but it can do very well with no teacher at all.

Chapter IV

THE MINISTER AND THE CLASS

Should the minister teach the Bible class? No, not if it can be avoided. The average minister has enough to do besides. In many Sunday-schools the class comes after the morning service, at the hour when the minister is often more exhausted than at any other hour in the week. It demands, especially if it be a large class in which discussion is free, the very best energies of its teacher, and the keen edge of the minister's energy has already gone. The average minister will teach his Bible class on energy borrowed from his nervous reserve. This much can be said from his side; but there is also something to be said from the side of the class.

It may be true that the minister knows more about the Bible than any one else in the church, but it does not follow that he is the best teacher. In a broad sense, the pastor's work is a work of teaching, but in the narrower sense many an excellent pastor and preacher would make a very poor teacher. The preaching instinct is akin to the teaching instinct, but it is not the same. The preacher must know how to give, but the teacher must know how to give and take, and the qualities needed to do the two successfully are

different. Moreover, the sermon-writing habit is not the best training for the needs of teaching. So one must not expect that the minister will be the best teacher by a sort of *ex-officio* right. He may be, but it is not to be reckoned against him if he is not.

A Bible class should be the place where all sorts of Biblical and theological questions may be freely opened, where any opinions may be presented and discussed, so long as it is done sympathetically and reverently. It may sometimes be better for freedom of discussion that the man who leads it should not stand as the church's official representative of sound orthodoxy. What a minister says on debated points of theology in the fragmentary way which discussion makes necessary, might easily misrepresent his real thought. Good people will sometimes leap to conclusions about what a man thinks on rather meager grounds, and a church is naturally sensitive about its minister's theology. By his very position, a minister is somewhat less free to present all sides of a debated subject without misunderstanding than a Bible-class teacher should be.

Still more important is the principle that it is always better for a leader to train workers than to do all the work himself. He may be worth a great deal more to the class standing behind the teacher than he could be when teaching; then when he is not at hand the class does not go to pieces because no one can take the minister's place.

Are there no circumstances when a minister may teach a class? Yes, there are several. First, when he is a born teacher and loves the work. Such a man

may add much to his power through his Bible class, but he must count the cost, and decide if this is the best way to use his energy. Second, when he wants to get hold of a certain group of persons, like some particular group of young men, and takes the Bible class to do it. Then the class becomes part of his pastoral machinery. This, however, is not a typical class. That has for its purpose the study of the Bible; this, the personal influence of the minister. Still, that need not impair the value of its Bible study. Third, when the class wishes to take up some subject with which he is specially familiar. There may come a time when the class wishes to study some phase of the modern views of the Bible, or the teaching of Paul, or the development of religion in the Old Testament, or some one of a dozen other things which need special training to grasp them properly and to teach them, and the minister may be exactly the right teacher for the class then.

How may the minister best help the Bible class which he does not teach? First, the Bible class is a part of the work of his parish. He will take the same interest in it that he does in the rest of his parish work. Perhaps, because it is specially concerned with the Bible, which is the one book to which his own study is pledged, he will take special interest in it. He will give it his moral support, and regard it as of importance among the agencies of his parish.

Second, he will be careful and scholarly in his own use of the Bible. A teacher that is trying to do thorough and earnest study in his class is very much but-

tressed in his position if the pulpit gives evidence of the same kind of work in the pastor's study. On the other hand, a Bible class may become, entirely against its will, an element undermining the minister's influence, if the people, having learned in it what careful modern Bible study is, discover that their pastor's treatment of Scripture is slipshod or antiquated. A good Bible class is a thing for a lazy minister to fear. It should never combat him; if it does, its influence is properly gone. But it will necessarily and inevitably expose him. It cannot help it.

Third, he may occasionally give some special topic to the class. In this way they can get the value of his Biblical study on points where they need it, and yet not put upon him the burden of teaching regularly.

Fourth, and perhaps of most importance, he may help teacher and class with counsel and books, so that they will not follow false or unprofitable tracks in the somewhat tangled field of Biblical scholarship. He may help them translate Biblical narrative into terms of spiritual value, and so may assist the class to find what no class ought to be content to miss, the genuine religious significance of the Biblical material which they study.

There is at present a great desire among ministers that their people should know the Bible better. The best aid a clergyman can have in this matter is a good Bible class. He may, perhaps, not teach it, but he certainly should lovingly, thoughtfully and prayerfully pastor it.

Chapter V

THE TOOLS AND THE WORKSHOP

It is better, of course, to have a separate room for the adult class. The modern Sunday-school accommodations fortunately provide with some degree of adequacy the facilities for teaching. A blackboard is indispensable. The setting down of the lesson heads, the making of diagrams and maps, the writing out of striking phrases, have a value which no true teacher will neglect. A good set of maps should be provided. For some courses a cheap note-book and pencil should be given to each person at the beginning of the lesson. These may be collected at the close, the note-book being the personal property of the scholar at the end of the course. If it is impossible to provide a separate room, a blackboard may still be used and over this maps may be hung.

The adult class should make a freer use of printer's ink. It pays to advertise the class thoroughly and persistently. At the beginning of the course an attractive announcement in the best style of the printer's art should be sent to each person in the church who may be interested. Follow this up by an occasional postal card when some particularly interesting subject is to be discussed.

In courses on the books of Amos and of Mark the writer had printed for his adult class a special edition of each book. The Amos was especially satisfactory. It had heavy paper covers with "The Message of Amos" and the inscription, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness," in bold type. The paper was heavy with broad margins. It was divided into sections, each section preceded by a title page with appropriate quotations from modern writers, altogether after the fashion of the best modern book printing. This book added very greatly to the interest of the class. The Mark was equally successful. It was bound in blue paper with an embossed title. One business man told the writer that he took it home the first day and read it through at one sitting with greater interest than he had previously found in any part of the Bible. The expense is, of course, a serious question. It might be prohibitive in the city, but in the small towns and country villages there are often printers of no little taste and ability who are glad in some "slack" season to undertake a matter of this kind at prices surprisingly moderate. Any of the smaller books of the Bible may be printed in this way to very great advantage. The text comes then with the freshness of a revelation. To a certain degree a similar result is obtained by the use of Moulton's Modern Readers' Bible. There is always a signal advantage in having a definite text in the hands of each pupil.

It should always be borne in mind that a definite result in training should be sought in the adult class. Whatever apparatus then is found useful in modern

educational methods will, in general, be useful in this class. The teacher would do well to visit a class-room in college or the higher grade of schools to study methods and apparatus.

Chapter VI

THINGS OUTSIDE THE LESSON

Shall an adult class have an organization and a social life? Adult classes have shared in the present tendency to organization. Probably most of the very large and successful classes are furnished with officers and a more or less elaborate organization. Almost as frequent is the use of social means as an instrument of class development. Naturally the two go together. Where a class has social duties and a multitude of business that must be attended to, the ordinary economics of life suggest the value of organization. Besides, the class which has the kind of spirit and membership that desires the one is very apt to find the other attractive.

There is no conclusive and universal answer to the question of the value of these things. He who would unqualifiedly either commend or condemn would only be attempting to unify things that are not equal. Let us look a little at the circumstances which will modify the answer.

The question is partly one of purpose. What do you regard as the chief purpose of your class? Is it to get as many people as possible interested in the class, or is it to study the Bible with those who care for

Bible study? The first may be a perfectly proper purpose. Then Bible study is either secondary, and the primary end is church expansion, or it is primary, with these means used to increase the interest of those who do not yet care much for the Bible study itself. The first is proper. A Bible class, like any other part of the work of the church, may be used as a means of church expansion. It is a much more worthy and dignified instrument than some which might be named. Class socials may well, in such cases, be added. They are all part of church development. Clearly, then, you have not a Bible class, but a section of the church machinery.

Is it wise to use organization and social effort to develop interest in the Bible class itself? It may be. The work of the class may be so large that it is best to divide the responsibility connected with it. If so, committees for plans of work will be a judicious addition to the regular officers. The social element may be of value in making the class more of a unity.

But, after all, these things are detractions from the main work of a class. The situation is more happy where they are not demanded. If a class depends on them, there is always a possibility that people will be brought into it who really do not care for the Bible study. A class diluted with such an element is weak. It is better to have a smaller number, and have them all there for Bible study, if both teacher and class will consent to such an understanding.

We may sum up thus: If Bible study is secondary in the object of the class, organization and social ele-

ments may be important factors in its legitimate work. If it is primary, they should be used only where they will be of real assistance to the Bible study. Each particular case must justify itself. On the whole, the less organization and social life are needed, the better. The functions of a Bible class are not those of a social club.

Should music have much prominence in a Bible class? What is the purpose of a Bible class? It is not that of the church service. In that service music has appropriately a prominent place. It both arouses and expresses the devotional feeling of the worshipers. The Bible class is for Bible study. The element of religious feeling which is the proper field of musical expression is completely subordinated to the element of religious instruction. The philosophy of worship allows music no primary place in the Bible class.

But may it not have a secondary place? Yes, sometimes, provided it is used only for purposes that are really significant. It is always appropriate to begin a Bible class with prayer, and that prayer may sometimes be sung rather than said. To be made of real value the element of routine must disappear. A single verse of "Nearer, My God, to Thee," may set the standard of devotion and draw all the intellectual work of the hour up to a higher and nobler standard. In such a way, used judiciously and sparingly, music may be an aid. But begin every hour with a hymn? No. Then it becomes routine. Sing while the people are coming in? Never. That is to degrade the music to an empty filler-up of time. Use music as an at-

traction to draw people into the class? No. Better wait till they can be drawn by the legitimate work of the class.

One other occasional use may properly be made of music. Its chief office in worship is to express the common religious feeling of an assembly. The chief office of the class is not to express religious feeling, but to gain religious knowledge. Its very name of "class" implies that. Yet it is true that very often knowledge issues in feeling, and the class finds itself face to face with some spiritual truth whose very statement wakes a gratitude or inspiration that necessarily has a content of emotion. This will not be the experience of every week, but occasionally it will come to every good class. When it comes, the class may well voice its gratitude or its aspiration in a verse of some fine old hymn, and so its members will take away not only the religious value of the lesson, but the religious joy of its expression.

In such ways music may occasionally aid a class, but it has no business there on any occasion when it is not the real expression of a definite sentiment.

Let us study the meaning of the elements of worship, and keep each in its own proper place.

There has been recently, even since the above chapter was written, a remarkable growth of interest in the adult class. Every indication points to one of the most important developments in the history of the Sunday-school as a result of this wide-spread interest. It should be said that the matter of organization is receiving large attention in classes now being formed. Provision is made in nearly all for social activity; many arrange for an annual banquet. In some an elaborate system of printed invitations, class enrolment cards, and a "follow up" plan for seeking absent members is employed. One class has even gone so far as to form a life insurance club, with sick and death benefits for its members! While effective use may doubtless be made of printer's ink, in advertisements and invitations, while it is well to have an effective organization and a measure of social enjoyment, a warning will not be out of place. There is grave danger that the class may usurp the larger functions of the church; danger that it may become simply a miniature church within a church to the great detriment of the larger interests of the church itself. The object of the class as stated in the chapter above is primarily study, to know more about the Bible and to apply its teaching to the needs of human society. Organizations, music, advertising, social enjoyment may be used legitimately, but they must all be made subsidiary to the larger end.

Chapter VII

HOW TO QUESTION IN AN ADULT CLASS

The art of questioning is a favorite subject with writers on education, and justly so. It is important in all teaching. It is supremely important in the teaching of children and youth. Whether its place is the same in the teaching of adults is a question which the teacher of the adult class needs to carefully consider. We must ask whether the objects to be attained are the same, whether any other means may in a measure take the place of questioning, and whether the adult class demands special adaptation in the method of questioning.

The teacher who already knows his class uses questioning for two purposes: To insure the knowledge of the facts which have been taught, either orally or by book; and to help students to think for themselves. We might call the first the repetition-purpose. The object is to repeat what is already known. "Come and say your A B C," is the base of it. It is important in all elementary education, whether the question of the teacher be to spell "dog," or to write a paradigm of a Sanscrit verb. As teaching advances beyond the elementary stage in any subject, the mere repetition-purpose becomes less frequently needed. The primary teacher is content if a spelling lesson can be learned

by rote, but the university teacher of English demands thought, and not mere memory.

The adult Bible-class teacher must never forget that he is not doing elementary teaching. His object is not to see that his class knows certain facts, and to drill it until it does. He may be obliged continually to teach facts. So is the university teacher, however advanced his pupils may be in a subject. They are taught, however, by relation to other facts, not by the dead lift of memory and repetition. Speaking broadly, the adult class has no place for the repetition-purpose of questioning.

The second purpose of questioning, to help the students to think for themselves, is never out of place. The wise teacher begins its use very early. What is the principle of the kindergarten, and most of the newer methods of education, but this? It marks the difference between Eastern and Western education. The Chinese student commits to memory his classics. The Western student is trained to independent thought and criticism. That means a very vast difference in the ideals of civilization. It is the difference between the methods by which Socrates and Confucius taught. Socrates asked questions "to bring thought to birth"; Confucius made a collection of older literature to be learned and repeated.

This is preeminently the purpose of the adult teacher in questioning. His place is not so much to convey or draw out mere information. Often many members of the class know as much about the Bible as he does. Even if they do not, information is not his

first purpose. That purpose is to suggest, to inspire, to put old knowledge in new shape. The purpose of a class is, at bottom, the moral purpose of the preacher, rather than the purely intellectual purpose of the teacher. Questioning designed to help them to think, to call forth different views of the subject under consideration, to bring out the best that is in each member of the class—this is the kind of questioning the teacher of the adult class should strive to attain.

I cannot help feeling, however, that where a teacher and a class are in perfect rapport, questioning will lose its predominance in adult teaching. At best questioning is a drawing-out process. The best adult class does not need to be drawn out. It comes out of itself when the opportunity is given. Will your class rise to a suggestion, thrown out like a bait? If so, why use the bare, bold question? I do not hesitate to say that the adult class teacher will do well to minimize the question as much as possible. Let him plan his work on the line of suggestion rather than of question, and aim to use the question only when the more delicate and less obtrusive means fail. If this can be done, there will be less exhibition of the machinery of teaching and more ease and smoothness in the flow of the class work.

The possibility of this, I repeat, depends on the class. I wish the members of a class would appreciate how much the success of a teacher depends on them. If they persist in sitting dumb and helpless before him, then he must drag out their thoughts, if they have any, with questions, as a

man drags jellyfish out of the water with an oar blade. The operation is not sport to any one. If their ideas leap to his suggestion, catch up his thoughts, run with them, draw them out and see how long and how firmly fastened the line is behind them, that is "good hunting," that is sport. It is joy to be either a teacher or a pupil in such a class as that. The class will perhaps think they have a good teacher, and the teacher will know that it is not his teaching, but the class, that makes his work successful. Am I idealizing? No. There are such classes. There must be many more of them, if the adult class is to take its proper place in the functions of the church. A teacher can do something toward developing such a class, but there must be something to develop. When we were boys, did we not hear an old proverb about making silk purses out of pigs' ears? This last paragraph has been said to the class. To the teacher, all I need say more is, aim so to teach that your class will answer questions you have not asked—explicitly. Then when you do ask questions, ask them to call forth thought, not merely to expose the bare facts of a lesson. The adult class demands a special adaptation of the art of questioning. Much that is said in manuals of education on this subject does not apply here. The teacher must make his own methods. He cannot follow those made for the teachers of children.

One cannot exhibit in detail the art of adult questioning. It would do little good if one could, for each class demands modifications. A few principles, however, can be laid down.

1. Do not ask questions where answer is obvious. The adult class does not like to be treated like a kindergarten. It makes the members feel foolish to be asked gravely to state what everybody knows. Besides, that adds nothing to the interest of the class. If, in the progress of the teaching, it is necessary to repeat moral platitudes or matters of common knowledge—and it often is—then let the teacher himself do it, subordinating these things to those which lie beyond, rather than lending them importance by asking some one in the class for them. If a lesson teaches that God cares for his children, and no one in the class suggests it, let the teacher say it rather than to submit the class to the indignity of such a question as, "Does God care for his children?"

2. Lay your train to lead somewhere. If question A moves in one direction and question B in another the class soon becomes confused. The best adult class teaching is that which so links all the work of the hour together that it revolves around not more than one, or at the most two or three topics. Perhaps the highest element of skill in adult class teaching lies in unifying the teaching of a lesson. The next point may seem the opposite of this. It is not. It is the complement.

3. Let questions lead where they will. Do not block out the course of the lesson so rigidly that it is inflexible. An intelligent class will usually lead a discussion into more profitable fields than the teacher could plan. Give them a little rein; only be sure that they get somewhere at the end.

4. Strike for the deep things of the lesson. Plunge beneath the surface, not to find mere puzzles or recondite matters, but to get the underlying principles of the lesson. You are teaching the reign of Saul, we will say. Why should you make an adult class spend all its time on the superficialities of the text, when there is a whole wealth of significance for national life in it? Adult teaching ought to find its home in the depths of the lesson, not in its superficialities.

5. Above all, never ask questions for the sake of making talk. The order to the teacher is not "Mark time," but "Forward, march."

Chapter VIII

HOW MAY A SILENT CLASS BE MADE TO ASK QUESTIONS

Many things may be done best by indirection. This is one of them. A teacher cannot make a class talk by command; and if he could, the talk would not be worth much. To make them talk by entreaty is not much less absurd. In social life people get so by long practise that they can "make conversation," which is a very fair imitation of the genuine article, but a class never acquires that skill. It must be genuine or nothing. Perfunctory answers to questions are not much better. Such teaching has been the peculiar bane of adult classes. For many years it was fostered by the ungraded papers that were used by all the school with their set questions and answers. They were bad enough for any grade, but for the adult class they were well-nigh fatal. We all remember them: "What did Jesus say?" "What did the disciples answer?" "What did Jesus then say?" The idea of smothering the rich Christian experiences of an adult class under that kind of a blanket! It was ridiculous, and it would have been a work of grace for a healthy sense of humor to have swept all this out of existence with a gale of laughter. So far as printed helps are con-

cerned, we are now mostly past that primitive stage. It is worth recalling, however, because the influence of it still sometimes lingers in well-meaning attempts to "get the members of the class to open their mouths." Let us lay aside perfunctoriness and all its works. We do not want the members of a class to "open their mouths." We want to help them to the point where they will desire to say something. If there is nothing they want to say they show their good sense in keeping quiet. To attempt to persuade them to say things that do not need to be said is to weary the class and disgust the persons subjected to such indignity.

If one speaks in strong terms on this subject, it is because of the consciousness that here has lain the secret of many failures in Bible-class teaching. A class is not a ritual to go through, but a club to discuss subjects of the greatest possible interest.

Let us recall to ourselves once again the question of purpose, a question which always dominates that of method. The purpose of the Bible class is to study the Bible. Presumably this study will lead to things about which the class will desire to express themselves. The give and take of discussion is, too, the best means of study in many subjects which the class will meet. At the same time it is true that there may be occasions and subjects when the ends of the class may be well served without much, or even sometimes without any, question or discussion. The rule of good judgment is the only rule that can be laid down.

The primary requisite to get a class to express itself is that the members shall have something to express.

The problem then is, how may the teacher help the class to the point of having something to express?

Doubtless that problem looks easy. See that they study the lesson, will be the reply. If they study it, they will surely have something to say on it. Yes, in the large that is true; though there are some people who could study a lesson to death and then have nothing to say about it, and there are others who would have plenty to say but would never say it without further help.

Besides, are we quite willing to rest the case on this solution? Perhaps in a class of young people in the formative period we might; but an adult class is not so much for the gaining of new knowledge as for the stimulation of thought. There may be many people in the class who cannot study the lesson. They are busy people, and yet they find help in the class and the class gets good from them. The work must proceed in such a way as to call out what they have to contribute. In fact, that an adult class should study the lesson at all is not the most important thing. I would not say that for a class of young people and I will leave the defense of it to common sense. Be that as it may, an adult class often contains a large proportion of people who cannot or will not, or both, study a lesson, and to press the demand for it would sometimes be detrimental to their best interests. Even if they all did study, there still remains the question of the wise leadership of discussion.

Now teachers differ as much as classes, and it would be absurd for one to attempt to lay down rules for the

guidance of another. Every person must gain his own experience and work in his own way. It is possible, however, that a few suggestions may assist.

Don't tell it all yourself. Leave something for the class to say. Let the most obvious things lie for the class to pick up; and the more disinclined the class is to talk, the more obvious should be the things left for them. Do not hint about a matter you determine to leave—do not ask questions about it. Act as though it were not in existence. If it is necessary for the complete understanding of the lesson, so much the better. Some one is quite sure to see its importance and to state it fully. If not, there is still time for the teacher to do so. If it comes from the class, give the one who proposes it full credit for its suggestion.

Don't always state both sides of a matter which may introduce discussion. Sometimes when a teacher and a class know each other so thoroughly that they dare to discuss controverted points, and yet discussion does not rise easily, it is worth while for a teacher to put strongly that side of a matter which he knows to be least popular in the class, and then prepare to leave the subject and proceed to something else as though there were nothing more to be said regarding this matter. Some one is likely to say, "Well, I don't know about that," and the discussion is on.

Don't snub any question. Members of the adult class do not like to seem to ask "silly" questions, and many of the more timid ask none for fear they may do it. To the true teacher no question is ever silly upon which anybody wants light. Do not "put down"

any opinion that any member of a class holds. Be sympathetic to every proposition. See the good in all that is said by the class. Every position has some truth in it. Try to find that and state it. So conduct discussion that your class will feel that they are all treated not only fairly but sympathetically. Help each one to express his opinion in the strongest possible way. He will then be willing that you should express the opposite opinion strongly. Be particularly careful not to treat with contempt any opinion that you may discover to be in your class. Suppose, for example, believing that premillenarianism is an absurdity, you go into class prepared to show it to be so out of the lesson of the day; and suppose you discover that some one in your class seriously holds it. Your duty is plain. You must change your plan of treatment altogether. You must help him to bring out everything which is good and helpful in that theory. You must not let it seem an absurdity if you can help it. I say "must"; it is a moral obligation, and no less a politic procedure. That way "thou hast gained thy brother." Then you may properly give the reasons which stand on the other side. The deed of trust of the hall of the Brahmo Somaj in Calcutta contains these words: "No object regarded as sacred by any one shall be spoken of with contempt in this building." The Bible-class teacher must hold fast to that rule for himself.

It is well sometimes to state at the beginning the question to which the lesson will naturally lead. "This lesson will bring up this question; you will want to say something about it when we come to it." It is well,

too, that such a formally stated question should be some matter relating to practical life, on which they all have some ideas. Your lesson is, for example, about the gifts of the Spirit. You want to find what they really were, and whether there is anything that corresponds to them in the Christian life of to-day. The last is a question which may call out a discussion of the class not merely interesting but helpful in Christian experience. Are there not men now who are "full of the Spirit and of wisdom?" How did they become so? Is it anything we can acquire? I should be surprised if the class did not go from such a discussion richer by some new sense of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit of God.

Don't talk too much about the desirability of the class talking. If you ever say anything at all about it do not speak mournfully or complainingly. The class loveth a cheerful teacher. Plan for it, use stratagem for it, lie awake nights over it, if you really must—though that is foolish—but do not pester them with it. Get them to express themselves as much as they will, and if that is less than you would like, strive to make yourself the better teacher that what attraction the class misses in one way it may find in another. Remember that after all the whole question is only one of method, and that the real problem of your teaching lies deeper than any question of method.

Chapter IX

THE FORMAL ADDRESS AS A METHOD OF TEACHING

Is the address form of teaching ever permissible or advisable? Doubtless, the ideal form of Bible-class teaching is discussion where the leader simply guides the talk, and all join in a free give-and-take, which makes the class more like a club than like the formal gathering that the word "class" suggests. Doubtless, also, this ideal is not often realized. It comes as rarely as moments of individual inspiration. Even with the best classes, not every session can be quite of this sort. There must be a combination of good fellowship in the personnel and of interest in the subject of the hour which cannot always be attained. The very name "class" suggests to many a sort of leadership on the part of the "teacher" that involves a little different ideal.

It would be well for us to distinguish sharply between the "class" of school or college or of the younger members of the Sunday-school, and the adult class. In the first, the leader is to teach. Minds which are immature are to be guided in the most skilful way possible and by the most direct course to the attainment

of a definite body of knowledge. In the adult class, persons of mature mind meet to study a subject with whose general content they are already familiar, and often inspiration figures much more largely in their purpose than does instruction. This difference of attitude toward the subject makes a corresponding difference in the form of teaching, and free discussion, rather than direct teaching, becomes the ideal. In fact, one would often like to get rid of the name "class" altogether, and call it the Bible Club.

Does not what has been said suggest the true answer to our problem? While the address is not the ideal form for the usual work of the club, there are circumstances when it is advisable and even necessary. The circumstances are determined by the subject-matter.

1. When matter is to be set before the class which needs to be put in logical order, it may well be done in an address. Such would be the development of any logical position. Suppose one wanted to show how the apostolic idea of the Holy Spirit grew out of the Hebrew idea, or Paul's idea out of the apostolic idea, it could be done by an address better than in any other way. Such would also be the case with the outline of the few Biblical books that contain logically developed arguments, like Romans and Hebrews. Other things, which in themselves might be studied in some other way, gain in impressiveness when put in the form of an address. I do not know any way in which a prophetic sermon can be made so forceful as by a teacher's

preaching it to a class, bringing out its connections of thought and those implications which a Hebrew audience understood, and which must be supplied to us. I think if that could be done sometimes men would acquire a quite new respect for the prophetic preachers. It may sometimes be wise to treat the Sermon on the Mount in the same way. Whatever may have been the original form of the sermon, as it now stands in the Book of Matthew it is a logical whole, whose order of thought is lost to most Sunday-school scholars because of the fragmentary way in which it is usually studied.

Of course, because the matter lies in logical order in the mind of the teacher, it does not follow that the presentation must be made in that way. One may draw its elements from the class and give the class the pleasure of seeing them fit together like a mosaic in a pattern. When one method shall be chosen, and when another, must be decided by the circumstances of the class.

2. When matter is to be presented with which the class is not familiar, the address form can be used. If a class is to study the Book of Daniel it must know the outlines of the history of the Maccabean time; if the Book of Revelation, it must know the relation of the Roman empire to Christianity, and how that relation changed between the times of Paul's epistles and the period represented by the latter part of Revelation. Unless the class has more opportunity for study than most it will be economy of time and effort to present

these subjects in the form of an address. Adult classes studying the Gospels ought to know something of the relation of the first three of these Gospels to each other. Younger classes may ignore it, but the adult class should not. This also may be profitably put in the form of a compact statement. In fact, there are many subjects not familiar to the average Bible class which bear directly on the study of some part of the Bible. When the appropriate time comes for them, the class that desires to do good work will not wish to let them pass. Very often the best way to present them is by the address.

There are, however, certain practical suggestions which should be borne in mind:

1. The address is to be kept to its proper use, and only employed occasionally and for a specific purpose. It is not the normal method of teaching.

2. An address must never be "spun out." If the matter can be properly presented in ten minutes, use only ten minutes for it.

3. If possible, let the address lead up to discussion: "This is the question we are coming to. After I have stated the matter, I hope you will have some answer to it."

4. Since this form is to be used somewhat rarely, the interest of the class should always be kept in mind. The address should not be used as a means to "bring out" an individual member of the class, unless there is good reason to suppose that the whole class will be

benefited thereby. The common good must be uppermost.

5. The address offers an opportunity to use persons outside the class. Here may be the place to make the contact between the pastor and the class. He may be able to present a subject in a better way than any one else, and might welcome the opportunity to do it.

6. The whole question, like every problem of method, must always be kept adjustable to particular conditions. Methods of teaching are not to be regarded after the manner of the laws of the Medes and Persians. The teacher's sole question is, How can my class acquire knowledge in the most economical, most comprehensive, and most thorough way? For many classes sometimes, for a few classes often, that way will be by the set address.

Chapter X

THE CLASS AND MODERN SCHOLARSHIP

What shall the adult Bible class do with modern Biblical scholarship? The answer is largely dependent upon the answer to the inverted question: What will the new Biblical scholarship do with the adult class? If the class consists of persons whose mental and religious attitude is such that it is sure to do them harm, they had better let it alone. Faith is more important than knowledge. To many classes the whole system of modern Biblical scholarship would be only a stumbling-block and a trial of faith and patience. It is true that a class has a mission of enlightenment, but even in the case of enlightenment it is not unwise to count the cost. There are classes in which, for one reason or another, there is such a prejudice against the views for which modern scholarship stands that it is the part, not of cowardice, but of wisdom, to ignore them.

But on the whole the danger to the adult class lies in another direction. It is a little too easy for a class to take the line of least resistance and ignore what would be really of great help to it. An intelligent class may well question seriously if it can afford to decide that it does not care to know what the majority

of the best scholars in the Biblical world are saying about the Bible. Such a decision is hardly in accord with the general tradition of American intelligence. It looks rather queer to those who stand outside the church in the attitude of critics of our religious life. It is a little too much like the ostrich with his head in the sand, to be a wholly dignified Christian position.

If I should seem to be harsh toward the religious attitude of a great multitude of noble and earnest Christians, let me hasten to add a word which furnishes a reasonable explanation of their position. I am convinced that this attitude is largely due to the influence of two elements. One is the inherited dogmatism of tradition. It says: "The position of your fathers is true. You want no change, you want no questions raised. You do not even care to know what any other position is." It is our boast that we have freed ourselves from this kind of dogmatism, but there is still much of it abroad. The other is the dogmatism of certain Biblical scholars. Whether because of the influence of the older dogmatic attitude of theology or what, it is a fact that there has sometimes been an undue amount of positiveness of opinions and a demand that other people shall accept these opinions as final.

The conscious or unconscious result of both kinds of dogmatism has been to make many adult classes unwilling to hear anything about newer views regarding the Bible. Such classes can only think of them as put forward with a demand that they be accepted as true. Now no wise teacher will put Biblical theories before an adult class in that way; but many classes may well

study them in order to find what scholars think. It is not necessary that the class should believe them, or even raise the question whether to believe them or not. If this whole matter could be placed on the ground of information about what the best scholars think, rather than on the ground of the acceptance or rejection of these views, a large part of the objection to this study would vanish.

Thus far I have spoken with classes of older people in mind. The teacher of a class of young people may well question whether attention to the newer scholarship is a matter of preference or obligation. The modern conception and interpretation of the Bible are "in the air," they are taught in our universities, they are the common stock of a good deal of literature. Some of them are assumed in most of the popular and nearly all of the scholarly books on the Bible. It is hardly exaggeration to say that a person cannot be intelligent on Biblical matters without knowing something about them. As time goes on some hypotheses now adopted will be modified, no doubt; but many of them will be the common views of the next generation, held with no thought of harm to faith. The situation regarding them is very much like that regarding evolution twenty-five years ago, or regarding the theories of geology at a still earlier period.

Is it wise or kind, or even right, to send young people out into the world, not only with no knowledge of these views, but with ideas about the Bible which will precipitate either a struggle for readjustment or a loss of faith if they should ever adopt them? Of one

thing I am sure—and I wish it could be impressed on the mind of every teacher of young people in our Sunday-schools—that it is wholly wrong to give young people the idea that the investigations and judgments of modern Biblical scholarship are dangerous to the Bible, and that their design is to destroy faith in God and in the Holy Scriptures. The Bible scholars of our generation are not irreverent or unchristian; they are not infallible, but they are sincere seekers after truth.

This does not mean that a class, whether of younger or older people, should set out on the deliberate study of the details of some Biblical problem. That should never be done, unless the class really wants it and the teacher is prepared to teach it. Most of these questions rest on so technical a basis that no person is prepared to teach them who has not had a technical training in them. In general, a teacher cannot prepare for this work by reading books. Even a theological training does not necessarily fit one to teach them.

With general results, however, rather than with details, the case is somewhat different. Many classes ought to take the results of modern scholarship into account. Results which are commonly accepted by recognized Biblical scholars should be made the basis of teaching. For example, Ecclesiastes should be assigned to wise men of late Hebrew times, and Daniel to the Maccabean period. The class may simply assume this and proceed to study the books on this basis. Results which are largely, even if not commonly, accepted by modern scholars may also properly be considered. A teacher of an adult class will do well to

know what these results are, even if he never purposes to present them in class. He would not desire to teach any other subject without knowing what the best scholars held regarding it.

The Bible, however, is a large field. It is not necessary that either class or teacher should try to cover it all at once. It will be quite sufficient if they obtain the results which belong to the portion they are studying. Even if the teacher does not present them to the class, the study will make his own teaching richer. It is usually possible, however, to present them simply and clearly. If this is done, the great question should not be: "Must we accept this, and straightway overturn all our old ideas?" Men do not treat new theories on any subject in that way. They should simply be treated as matters for consideration, as ideas about the way this part of the Bible was formed which are widespread among Biblical scholars. Often the minister can give the class a talk on the subject which will be extremely valuable both for him and for them.

In all this matter, the great things to be desired are calmness, patience, toleration, a truth-seeking spirit, and the recognition of the fact that all who love the Bible are working together, however they may differ in opinions, with the common purpose of finding the truth. And back of the truth stands God.

Chapter XI

EXTRA-BIBLICAL STUDIES

The question is often asked in the modern Sunday-school, Should any study be undertaken the material for which is not taken from the Bible? Under certain limitations and with the exercise of great wisdom on the part of the leader, advanced classes the members of which have traversed again and again the Biblical material may certainly undertake studies outside the Bible.

The warrant for such a course lies, first, in the fact that in its own field of the history of faith and the setting forth of the moral law the Bible is by no means inclusive. It covers only a limited range of human experience. It is the religious history of only one people. It is inspired in its wisdom, authoritative in its moral teaching, profoundly valuable and inspiring in its influence. It should be thoroughly studied and mastered during the formative years of religious training, but it cannot, in the nature of the case, be the only text-book of a complete religious education. At the same time the Bible will of course furnish the basis of all extra-Biblical study. For example, the social relationships of our modern life are legitimate subjects

for study in the adult class. We have made the distinction between things religious and things secular too sharp. That is the cause of much of our social dishonesty, the crimes of graft and political exploitation, the dishonest manipulation of business. It is eminently proper to study in such a class the problems of modern society, but in our study we shall be constantly making reference back to the Bible. How has society worked itself out, in accordance with Jesus' program of a kingdom of God, or contrariwise? To know this, to know whether we are living lives which would meet the approval of Jesus, is as important as to know what he did on a certain day in Galilee, but to decide the question we go back to the authority of his message. We analyze a certain business method and find it wrong. Why? Because it is not in accordance with the teaching of Jesus. A study is given in this volume of the institutional and social life of the community. We are justified in using such a course because there is a moral basis of communal life. This fact is not always recognized, but that is all the more reason why it should be emphasized. The functions of communal life should be exercised in accordance with the principles of brotherhood as taught by Jesus. It should be insisted upon that true democracy and brotherhood are really one and the same thing. The element of responsibility runs through the whole system. All government becomes, in the last analysis, obligation. One may think that certain municipal functions are wholly secular, such, for example, as the furnishing of water. Surely the church has no concern

with the building of reservoirs and the laying of pipes. But is this so? Through neglect an epidemic of typhoid fever breaks out, hundreds of valuable lives are lost. If a gang of cutthroats had seized the town, defied the police, and murdered these citizens, strong men and little children, the church would have concerned itself mightily. What is the difference? If money which should have been used to build a filtration plant finds its way through "graft" into the hands of conscienceless individuals, are they not guilty of infringement of the moral law? There are those who are beginning to call it murder. The city is clearly under heavy obligation to administer all functions of government honestly and impartially, and it is just as clearly the duty of the Christian citizen so to inform himself upon all subjects relating to the communal life that he can act promptly, effectually, and justly.

It is not very difficult to draw the line between subjects which may be studied and those which may not in such a class. It would not be right for a group of men to get together on Sunday to study the details of a certain process of manufacture in order to gain knowledge which would advance their business interests. But if the question were of the improper employment of women and children in a certain trade the process of manufacture might be taken into consideration in the relation to such employment. Whenever the general development of a Christian society is concerned, whenever the questions of moral obligation and responsibility, of righteousness and justice are concerned, the class may feel sure of its ground. With

this distinction as a basis we may classify the subjects suitable for extra-Biblical study as follows:

I. The History of the Church.

It seems very strange that the Church has in its teaching so completely neglected its own history. We study with attention and care the absorbingly interesting details of the history of the Apostolic Church in the Book of Acts; why should we not follow with equal enthusiasm the equally important development of the Church as it unfolds its ever-widening influence through the centuries? Can we designate any moment when the sacred history of the Church ended? Has it not always been under the guidance of God? Has it not always possessed the prophetic and inspirational qualities? Why should we cease our study with the brief narrative of Luke? Why not study, also, the later periods and crises? The separation of the eastern and western branches, the great councils, the crusades, the Reformation, the story of modern missions are of no less value to the Church of to-day. Indeed, it is probable that many serious mistakes in the past might have been avoided had the Church possessed an accurate perspective of its own history.

II. Social and Economic Questions.

The teaching of Jesus was of a kingdom of God that implies necessarily a social order, a governmental and administrative system. His teaching may be formulated as a system of ethics. He was a constructive statesman as well as a preacher of righteousness. The

social organism and all problems relating to the conduct of society must then be proper subjects for study in the adult class. What is needed perhaps more than anything else in our religious life to-day is the interpretation of all the phenomena of modern society in the teaching of Jesus. The time has certainly come for a scientific criticism of modern civilization with the life of Jesus as a standard of comparison. It is charged rightly against society that it has never really made a trial of the teaching of Jesus. The difficulty is here: The teaching of Jesus has been studied as an academic treatise unrelated to actual life. War, for example, is wholly indefensible judged by Jesus' standard of living. Men have known this as a fact, but they have gone on fighting on the ground of national expediency. What we need is a relentless searching of all the facts of life to-day with the life and message of the man Jesus as an absolute and undeviating standard. We can hardly measure the possibilities which might grow out of a study of this sort in which the whole Church should for once take modern life and test it fairly by the life of Jesus.

III. Literature.

The literature of the Bible, great as it is, has the same limitation which affects the historical narrative. It does not cover the whole range of religious experience, because life has gone on under new conditions and in new environments since it was written. The Bible has a marvelously wide range of spiritual teaching, and many of its conclusions are of universal and

timeless validity. But any individual experience, however humble, adds something to the richness and fulness of the experience of the race. The Bible gives certain conclusive facts regarding immortality, the resurrection of Jesus is the basis of all subsequent experience, yet the idea has grown richer and deeper through the accumulated content of the Christian consciousness through the centuries.

Chapter XII

BIBLE STUDY FOR CLUBS

A group of men at the "corner store" of a little country place decided that their evenings might as well be spent to some profit, and began reading the Bible and talking over the matters which arose. In due time the group transferred itself to the houses of its members, and continued for a winter as an informal club for Bible study. It kept the purpose with which it started, that of intellectual interest—an interest which was religious but not, in the common sense, devotional.

A successful woman's club in a cultured New England village, searching the universe for new objects of interest to form the basis of a winter's study, turned to the Bible as interpreted by modern scholarship. The course was laid out, subjects arranged and assigned, and the study proceeded through the winter much as the study of English literature might have been.

These instances are illustrations of a new phase of Biblical study. It is study by clubs. Such study is not uncommon now. Not long ago it was seldom, if ever, attempted, and would scarcely have been successful if it had been. Then Bible study was thought of as necessarily limited to one of two lines; either devotional or controversial. Its entire interest lay in

its religious use. Any recognition of another interest would have seemed almost sacrilegious. This limitation of interest, this loss of the large human value of the Bible, was largely due to the unfortunately narrow view of inspiration which thought of the Bible as so exclusively the word of God that the human element in it was dropped out of sight. The enlarged interest in the Bible is due in great measure to the newer Bible study. That has, while still recognizing the Bible as the word of God, recognized also that it is his word given through men. As the rabbis said, "The law speaks in the language of men." The world has somewhat suddenly waked up to the fact that in this body of books we call the Bible we have the greatest and most interesting available collection of ancient history, law, archeology, folk-lore, social study and literature. The whole range of life and its expression, except the expression of the art of form, lies spread before us in the Bible. Is it any wonder that with this new world, opened almost as freshly as though the Bible had just been discovered, there should be a renewed impulse to Bible study, such as has not been in the history of Christianity? It will always remain true that the great interest of the Bible is religious, but if we could drop out of sight that interest, so that the Bible could no longer have any religious value for us, it would still be the most interesting book that is open to the western world.

Now all this wide range of human interest makes possible the club study of the Bible. There is no reason why clubs, in their search for subjects of wide and

vital interest, should not turn with eagerness to the Bible. Some have already done so. It requires no prophetic gift to see that others will do so in increasing numbers in the future.

There is a little tendency in some quarters to be jealous of this wider interest in the Bible, as though it were detrimental to the religious value of the Bible. Such jealousy is a mistake. On the contrary, the Church may well be glad that the Bible is commanding attention. Secular interest in the Bible will not be a religious loss. Since the fundamental purpose of nearly every book in the Bible is religious, any study of it, no matter from what starting-point, must ultimately come to the appreciation of its religious teachings. Better literary and historical knowledge of the Bible will of necessity issue in better religious knowledge of the Bible. God's word will not return to him void. It will accomplish his purpose. In the better, higher Christianity which the Church has a right to look forward to, it will beyond doubt be recognized that one of the great steps of advance was taken when the Bible was raised to its rightful place of widespread human interest. It is well, then, for those who are interested in the religious study of the Bible to lend all possible aid to its study outside the specially religious aims and methods. The Bible is its own best defense.

In fact, the sooner we can get rid of the entire spirit which lies back of such terms as "the defense of the Bible" the better.

The very phrase implies that the Bible needs to be defended from those who would fain study it. We

need to learn what Christ meant when he said, "He that is not against us is for us." The Bible needs no defense from those who study it. They are its friends. If they have interest enough to approach it with the attention that study involves, they either are, or in time may be, open to all the rich influences that can flow from it. The attitude of suspicion and jealousy ill becomes those who claim to put their trust in the word of the living God.

The club desires to know what classes of subjects are available for it in the wide range of Bible study. One may answer, in general, the same classes of subjects which would be available in the study of any other ancient literature; for example, the Greek. The most obvious class of subjects is the literary. In the literary study of the Bible, as of other literatures, the best point of departure is the very obvious one of the division of the subject into its literary groupings. As a club would begin with dividing Greek drama into tragedy and comedy, so it may begin by dividing Biblical literature into prophecy, wisdom, literature, etc. The following list of divisions of the subject may be of value: Hexateuch (Genesis to Joshua), Prophetic History (Judges to Kings), Priestly History (Chronicles to Nehemiah), Prophecy, Wisdom Books (Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes), Poetical Books, Historical Tales (Ruth, Jonah, Esther), Apocalyptic Books (Daniel, Revelation), the Gospels, Acts, the Pauline Epistles, the general Epistles. This is a somewhat full division, and others might be made on other lines. The basis of this is purely literary, marking the different

classes of literature represented in the Bible. Each of the larger divisions is alone sufficient for much study. Hebrew Prophecy, for example, is as large a subject for club study as Greek Drama.

Another list of literary subjects available is some of the great books of the Bible. In such a study the books may be either taken from one of the literary divisions—the more scholastic method—or from a wider variety of these divisions, thus sampling the various classes of Biblical literature—the method doubtless more in accord with usual club study. The following are some of the books which might be studied with profit and without too much difficulty: Psalms, Proverbs, Samuel, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Deuteronomy, Ruth, Jonah, Esther, Job, Ecclesiastes, Daniel, any one of the Synoptic Gospels, Acts, Corinthians, Romans, Hebrews, Revelation. Several of these books involve questions which, to the Biblical scholar, are very puzzling, but they all furnish matter for most interesting popular literary study. No club that is willing to put as earnest work into the literary interpretation of the Bible as it would into the interpretation of Browning can miss an interesting series of studies if the choice is made from this list. Surely, a book of the Bible is worth as serious literary examination as a book by Browning. Another line of interest is opened by a comparative study of literary types. The study of Job and the Greek tragedy, especially of Æschylus; of Proverbs and proverbial literature elsewhere, for example, Poor Richard's Almanac; of Psalms and modern hymns; of Hebrew history and modern history or

Greek history; of the Hebrew historical tales and the modern short story; and so on.

While the literary study of the Bible is almost a new discovery, the archeological study is quite new. In the researches in Egypt, Babylonia and Palestine itself, new fields have been added of very great interest to the student of the Bible. The study of ancient life in Bible lands is a subject which includes two branches: the revelations of modern explorations, and the study of the life as revealed in the Bible. Either of these might be taken separately. The subjects might be arranged as follows: Palestine, the land, its topography and its cities; the daily life of the people, as shown in the Bible, commerce, industry, etc. Homes and home life, education, the place of woman; religion, Canaanite and Hebrew, high places, religious rites, feasts; archeology, ruins of cities, mounds; Jerusalem from the Bible and from modern explorations; modern Jerusalem, Lachish, and other more recent explorations of the Palestine Exploration Fund; Egypt, the land; the people; modern exploration; Babylonia, an outline of its history; its Biblical relations; modern exploration; the Hammurabi Code. This list only suggests some of the main subjects which would be found of interest.

Other subjects offer themselves; subjects in history and in the development of thought, but the lines already suggested are more nearly akin to the usual work of most clubs, and can also be taken up with less technical knowledge. Perhaps, taken all in all, the literary subjects best lend themselves to club treatment.

For clubs that are not afraid of "modern thought," and can have some guidance in the subject, the Bible as interpreted by modern Biblical scholarship makes a most attractive subject. Whatever one may think of the modern Biblical scholarship, the so-called "higher criticism," it is surely a part of intelligence on current topics to be in some measure familiar with it. The club furnishes an appropriate place to gain that familiarity. Here the controversial will naturally be subordinate to the informational, and the spirit of fellowship and courtesy will dominate the attitude of all the members.

In these days of multiplied club activity it may be bringing coals to Newcastle to presume to make any suggestions about methods of club study; and yet one often finds that the mere idea of a Biblical subject is enough to throw ordinary notions of method into confusion. There is an impression that, the Bible being unique, it cannot be studied as other literature is. That is a mistake, growing doubtless out of the older tendency to isolate the Bible among books. There is no reason why any method which a club has found successful in dealing with the literature and history of other nations should not be equally successful when applied to the Bible. If the club has had a profitable season with the study of English literature or any portion thereof, they may turn to Biblical literature with the same methods, and expect to win the same profit from that.

There is, however, another element which makes an obstacle in the minds of many. It is the feeling that

Bible study, especially if the newer Biblical learning is to be considered, is a large and difficult field, perhaps too large and too difficult for the club to enter upon with profit. That is a thoroughly healthy feeling. It is one of the hopeful signs of the popular attitude toward Bible study that it is recognized as a subject whose mastery means thorough and careful study. No club can become professional students of the Bible, as no club can become professional students of Greek literature, by what a short series of club meetings can furnish. But the modern club is not usually abashed by large subjects. It is quite as possible to deal with the Bible as with many other subjects that are taken up. A knowledge of the outlines of a subject is not to be despised. Of course it is not scholarship, in the strict sense, but it is profitable to know something of many subjects in which we can claim no scholarship. Sometimes the help of a leader who is familiar with Biblical study may be obtained. One club, with such a leader, utilized his services only for every other meeting. The alternative meetings were used for papers by the club on subjects related to the previous meetings, and suggested at the beginning of the course by the leader. One advantage of Bible study for clubs is that it may be of any degree of simplicity. It may be as informal as the gathering at the country store mentioned above, simply the reading of the Bible and talking it over in an informal way, or it may be as elaborate and scholarly as the tastes and facilities of the club members may dictate. Any method will bring its measure of profit.

A few suggestions for the club study may not be out of place:

1. The object is information, not controversy.

2. The club is not a devotional meeting; but often the information gathered at a club will have its spiritual fruitage in private devotion.

3. Distinguish sharply between different classes of literature in the Bible. They differ as much as classes of literature in other nations.

4. Do not try to drag theology into portions of the subject where it does not belong.

5. Treat the whole subject as a means of culture, remembering that knowledge of the Bible is as much a matter of culture as knowledge of any other classic subject.

6. Remember that, after all, culture should culminate in a better, purer life as its natural and appropriate end.

STUDIES OF THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

Rev. Newton M. Hall

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Excellent commentaries are:

Mitchell. Amos. Houghton, Mifflin & Co. $1.50.

Harper. Amos and Hosea. Scribners. $2.50. In the International Critical Commentary. Very full. A commentary for scholars.

Driver. Joel and Amos. Cambridge Univ. Press. $1.00. In the Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges. A good popular commentary on the English text.

G. A. Smith. The Book of the Twelve Prophets. Vol. I. A. C. Armstrong. $1.50.

In the Expositor's Bible. A very attractive treatment of Amos. Horton. Minor Prophets.

IN THE NEW CENTURY BIBLE

W. R. Smith. Prophets of Israel. Appleton. $1.50. Scholarly discussion of Amos. Sanders and Kent. The Messages of the Earlier Prophets. Scribners. $1.25. Articles in Bible Dictionaries.

One of the most fascinating of the subjects available for the adult class is "Biblical Introduction," which

means, in plain language, a study of the various books of the Bible as separate pieces of literature. (Such a study under a competent teacher may be made very elaborate.) It may take up the vexed and intricate questions of date and authorship, attempting to distinguish the various documents of the "composite" books, and discuss all the questions raised by the "higher criticism." If this course is taken the teacher must be thoroughly competent, and he should possess in addition a constructive temper. Much service may be done by such a man in clearing up misconceptions regarding the Bible, but he must be a person of the highest scholastic attainments, and possessed of the calmest, most judicial spirit, otherwise he should not venture upon the stormy seas of controversy.

It is by no means necessary, however, to discuss the more intricate and controversial questions involved in Biblical criticism. Viewing the books wholly from the historical and literary aspects, there is much material which can be made of interest and charm. Each book has come to have its own history in the long experience of the centuries, as it has made its impression on men's hearts and woven itself into men's lives. No doubts as to authorship, no controversy as to dates can possibly rob the Bible of this value. For classes which wish to know something of the Bible as a collection of books, from the literary and historical standpoints, the following outline or general method may be suggested:

I. The author. What is known of him? a. historical facts? b. tradition?

II. Date? a. probable? b. possible?

III. Literary form? A. prose? a. history? b. biography? c. letters? d. prophesy? e. stories? (1) historical? (2) imaginative? B. poetry? a. gnomic? b. lyric? c. elegaic? d. dramatic? e. epic?

IV. A brief review of the book, written exactly like a modern book review.

V. What was its broad purpose? What effect was it intended to produce?

VI. What literary allusions has it drawn out? Interesting traditions regarding it? Has it had a peculiar place in human affection?

The following is a synopsis of the book of Amos according to this plan:

I. Amos: Old Testament. Minor Prophets.

II. Amos. He calls himself one of "the herdsmen of Tekoah." He lived in the little village of Tekoah, not far from Bethlehem, on the edge of the pasture land or wilderness of Tekoah, which slopes from the high central ridge of Palestine to the Dead Sea. He must have been poor, but not without education. He made journeys to Samaria where he delivered his prophesies. He boldly defied the chief priest at Bethel, and a late tradition says that he was murdered by the son of Amaziah.

III. About 760 B. C.

IV. Prose. Prophesy.

V. It is a prophecy of doom upon the nations, and upon Samaria in particular. Its style is vivid, imagina-

tive, filled with somber and terrible pictures. It declaims with fierce invective against the treatment of the poor and the oppressed. It possesses a strong sociological significance as revealing the conditions of society at a time of great national prosperity. In places its tone is startlingly modern. It moves on with sustained and lofty power to the end. The scene in which Amos defies the high priest is dramatic in its intensity.

VI. The great purpose of the book was to expose the sins of the people of Samaria, particularly the injustice and cruelty of the rich toward the poor, the failure of justice, and the corruption of morals.

VII. George Adam Smith says of Amos, "The book of Amos opens one of the greatest stages in the religious development of mankind. Its originality is due to a few simple ideas, which it propels into religion with almost unrelieved abruptness. But, like all ideas which ever broke upon the world, these also have flesh and blood behind them. . . . behind the book there beats a life."

Cornill says, "Amos is one of the most wonderful appearances in the history of the human spirit."

Care must be taken in such a study not to be drawn into too much detail. The object is to give a series of strong, vivid, "flashlight" pictures of each book of the Bible, as a distinct piece of literary workmanship. The reviews in particular should be brief, not over ten minutes in length, picking out the salient points and characterizing them. These reviews may be entrusted to members of the class, if these conditions are observed.

The main heads should be written each week on the blackboard. An entire lesson may be given to the longer and more important points, but the shorter books may be grouped by twos and threes. The course may take a year or eighteen months. A course of this kind forms an admirable beginning for advanced study; indeed, something of the kind would seem to be almost essential for any intelligent understanding of Biblical literature.

Such interest may be aroused that a more careful study of certain books may be demanded. In that case the structure of the book and its teaching may be carefully considered. An analysis or synopsis of the book should be prepared, and if possible printed or typewritten. It may then be taken up topic by topic, in a course arranged to cover a definite period of time. Subjects for papers may be selected in advance and assigned to various members of the class. In such a study, critical questions may be made prominent or not, as the leader may desire. If they are not to be considered, it would be better to say frankly at the outset that the leader does not consider himself competent, or does not consider it wise to enter into such discussion.

BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY

BY PROF. IRVING F. WOOD, PH.D.

The following list of characters easily lend themselves to biographical study: Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Samson, Samuel, Saul, David, Solomon, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezra, Nehemiah, John the Baptist, Christ, Peter, Paul. The list might be extended, but these will illustrate the main phases of Biblical life. A class to whom more abstract study is not attractive may often be very successful with biographical study. By an orderly arrangement of such study history may often be presented more concretely and vividly than by the direct study of history itself. It is to our advantage that the Old Testament presents most of its historical material in biographical form.

A general scheme into which this study may be fitted, with more or less adaptations and omissions in particular cases, is as follows:

1. The world into which the character was born.

2. Personal environment and conditions which affected his life and work.

3. His youth, and its abiding impressions.

4. His earlier work.

5. Conditions which modified his life and work as it proceeded.

6. The personal religious side of his life. His conception of God. His work for God; its aims and results.

7. The last years and close of his life. Summary of events of his life.

8. An estimate of his character; its strength and weakness, good and evil, nobility and pettiness.

9. His influence; the estimate which a contemporary would have made of it; which a man in the next generation would have made; which we are able to make. What changes has time wrought in this estimate? What are the elements of situation or of character which have caused these changes?

10. What are the corresponding situations and characters in modern life?

11. What did the Bible writers wish to teach by telling the story of this life?

The following study of the life of Samuel is given as an example of the way in which the above outline may be developed:

The Life of Samuel

1. The world into which Samuel was born: Israel still in the tribal state, with no relation to other nations. For the civilization, read Judges 14-21, gathering information as to morals, national unity, governing powers, worship, grade of civilization. Samuel lived in the transition from this era to a better.

2. Personal environment: Birthplace (I Sam. 1: 1). The position of Ephraim among the tribes, central, important. See references to Ephraim in Judges.

3. Youth. (a) Study carefully I Sam. 1-3. Notice the religious home, the vow of his mother, the character of Eli, the education at the Tabernacle, the influence of the worship, the knowledge of the nation and its needs which would come to him, the influence of the early prophetic call. How did these things fit for later work? (b) Read I Sam. 4-6. What became of Shiloh? (Not mentioned again in Sam. See Jer. 7: 12). Estimate the effect of these events upon Samuel directly, and, through the effect upon the nation, indirectly.

4. His earlier work. (a) I Sam. 7. Political and religious situation of Israel. Does the gathering at Mizpah indicate a new spirit in Israel? Reasons for its growth? Probable age of Samuel. Result of this gathering for the nation; for Samuel. His work as judge; its extent (7: 16, 17); its nature. (b) The "schools of the prophets." Later (I Sam. 19: 18-24) Samuel is at the head of the communities of prophets. Consider whether they were growing during this period; their national and religious ideas, and their value; Samuel's probable connection with them. Are they one of the means by

which Samuel develops religious and national aspirations?

5. Conditions which modified his life and work as it proceeded. Samuel's retirement from the judgeship, and appointment of Saul as king, I Sam. 8-12. Study carefully the order of events; why the people desired a king; how he was chosen; how he came into the kingship. The part of Samuel in the whole, as a revelation of his character; of his feeling toward the people, of their feeling toward him. Consider the test of his character which these events involve.

6. The religious side of his life. Study ch. 7, the speeches in 8 and 12; 10: 18, 19; 15: 10-31, especially 15: 22, 23. Samuel's conception of God. His conception of the service of God. His idea of the relation of civic and social duty with religion. Primitive elements in his idea of religion. Higher elements in it. What were his religious aims? What did he accomplish for the worship of Jehovah in Israel?

7. The last years and close of his life, I Sam. 13-16; 19: 18-24; 25: 1. (a) His disappointment in Saul; its grounds; his place yet in Israel; his choice of David; his later work as suggested in 19: 18-24. (b) His character, as revealed by these events; his affection for Saul (15: 35); stern sense of

duty (15); readiness to still take measures for the future (16); interest in the prophetic order (19: 18-24). (c) Summarize the events of his life. Its chief historic peculiarity, a life in transition times. Review events as related to this fact.

8. Estimate of character. (a) Strength, sternness, tenderness, unselfishness, civic integrity, power of initiative, ability for popular leadership. (b) Weakness. Can you call the following elements of weakness: His own sons not upright? His judgments of Saul and David's brothers not confirmed? The Philistines still overlords of Palestine? Give Biblical references for each of the statements in (a) and (b). (c) Compare Samuel with other Biblical rulers; e. g., Moses, David, Solomon, Nehemiah.

9. His influence. (a) Contemporary; study I Sam. 7, 8, 10, 12. What is the bearing on this of the story in 28: 3-25? (b) The next generation. Taking your stand in the kingdom of David, consider how the nation was different because of the work of Samuel, in the fact and character of the kingdom; in the position of the prophets at the court; in the worship of Jehovah. (c) What is our estimate of the work of Samuel, in the light of the growth of civil and religious ideals? Has the character of Samuel gained or lost with the advance of time? Compare with Jacob, David. Has any such

change, if it has taken place, come from the circumstances of his life, or from the elements of his character itself?

10. Corresponding situations and characters. Elements of the situation: a transitional time, closing one era and opening another, the work lying in both. Elements in the character: patriotism, piety, unselfishness, tact. Any modern characters to correspond? Elements of transition in social life of the present day: in business, the close of an age of individualism and small enterprises, the opening of an age of larger affiliation; in government, the close of the age of national isolation, the opening of new relationships and responsibilities; in religion, the close of an age of submission to religious traditions, the opening of new views of the Bible and theology. The character of Samuel as throwing light on what is needed in such times.

11. What did the Bible writers mean to teach by his story? Note passages showing that God was guiding the founding of the kingdom; that the word of the prophet was the message of God; that obedience to Jehovah brings prosperity, disobedience brings sin; that Jehovah only is to be served. Can you group the writer's purposes in the story of Samuel about any one purpose? Notice how it is a part of the general story of the development of the Kingdom under the guiding hand of God.

Bibliography

The best small commentary on I Samuel is The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges (Macmillan, 60c.). An excellent chapter on Samuel is found in a book in many respects antiquated, Stanley's History of the Jewish Church. A pamphlet of study covering this period is Pres. Harper's Samuel, Saul, David and Solomon (Am. Institute of Sacred Literature, Hyde Park, Chicago). Samuel and Saul, Men of the Bible Series (Revell) is of some value.

(Sample Outline Courses of Study)

THE STUDY OF THE BIBLE BY CHAPTERS

PREPARED BY DR. W. W. WHITE, PRESIDENT OF THE BIBLE TEACHERS' TRAINING COLLEGE, NEW YORK

Outline for Study of a Chapter

I. Past experience.
II. Present knowledge.
III. Strongest impression after continuous reading aloud.
IV. Relation in thought to preceding chapter.
V. Relation in thought to succeeding chapter.
VI. Place in the plan of the book as a whole.
VII. Name.
VIII. Date.
IX. Best text.
X. Key verse.
XI. Literary features.
XII. Authorized and Revised Versions compared.
XIII. Parallel passages.
XIV. Persons.
XV. Places.
XVI. Five striking facts.
XVII. Condensation of thought.
XVIII. Theme and outline of thought.
XIX. Topics for study.
XX. Words for study.
XXI. Difficulties—Questions.

XXII. Remarks, Observations, Illustrations, Lessons.

XXIII. Miscellaneous points.

XXIV. Results of study (a) respecting belief, (b) respecting practise.

Specimen Chapter Study

Acts I

I. Past Experience. Have heard it read and have read it often. Had very profitable special study of this chapter in May, 1894.

II. Present Knowledge. Am able to think through the chapter. Would recognize any verse as belonging to this chapter did I hear it. Have memorized verse 8.

III. Strongest Impression After Continuous Reading Aloud. Prominence of the resurrection, ascension and return to earth of our Lord.

IV. Relation to Preceding Chapter. A continuation of the record found in Luke.

V. Relation to Succeeding Chapter. Very close. Leads up to the record in thought.

VI. Place in Plan of the Book as a Whole. Essential. Contains introductory material which is of the utmost value in understanding succeeding chapters.

VII. Name. The Ascension chapter.

VIII. Date. About 29 A. D.

IX. Best Text. Verse 8: "But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you," etc.

X. Key Verse. Verse 4: "And, being assembled together with them," etc.

XI. Literary Features. Graphic narrative.

XII. A. V. and R. V. Compared. Important changes incorporated in the R. V. are:

1. Many proofs, v. 3.
2. Authority, v. 7.
3. The parentheses, verses 15, 18, 19.
4. Office, v. 20.

XIII. Parallel Passages. Important sections to be compared are:

1. Accounts of the ascension in the Gospels.
2. Accounts of the death of Judas in the Gospels.
3. Names of the Apostles in the Gospels.
4. Quotations from Psalms compared with original in Psalms 69, 109.

XIV. Persons. (1) I, (2) Theophilus, (3) Jesus, (4) The Holy Spirit, (5) The Father, (6) John Baptist, (7) Two men, (8) Peter, (9) John, (10) James, (11) Andrew, (12) Philip, (13) Thomas, (14) Bartholomew, (15) Matthew, (16) James the son of Alphæus, (17) Simon Zealotes, (18) Judas the son of James, (19) the women, (20) Mary, the mother of Jesus, (21) Brethren of Jesus, (22) Joseph Barsabbas, (23) Judas Iscariot, (24) Matthias, (25) David.

XV. Places. (1) Jerusalem, (2) All Judea, (3) Samaria, (4) The uttermost part of the earth, (5) Galilee, (6) Heaven, (7) Mount Olivet, (8) Upper chamber.

XVI. Five Striking Facts:

1. This book is addressed to the same person to whom the Gospel of Luke is addressed.
2. The disciples, even at this late date, had very gross ideas about the nature of Christ's work.
3. The return of our Lord in like manner as he departed is here announced.
4. Peter and prayer are prominent in the latter part of the chapter.
5. The qualifications of an apostle are here given, and the selection of one by lot after prayer is recorded.

XVII. Condensation of Thought.

In the former treatise, O Theophilus, I gave an account of Jesus' doing and teaching until the time of his ascension. While yet on earth he directed his disciples to wait at Jerusalem for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. His ascension was on this wise: Having led his disci-

ples out to Olivet, while he was talking with them a cloud received him, and as they wondered, two angels stood by and assured them of his return. With joy at this word they went to Jerusalem, and waited in prayer for the fulfilment of the promise of the Father. During this period, at the suggestion of Peter, Matthias was chosen by lot after prayer to take the place of Judas, who, on account of his iniquity, according to prophecy, went to his own place.

XVIII. Theme with Outline of Thought.

The Ascension of our Lord.

1. Preliminary directions of Jesus to disciples.
2. The event itself with attendant circumstances.
3. Subsequent action of disciples.
   - *a.* They return to Jerusalem.
   - *b.* They unite in prayer.
   - *c.* They select an apostle.

XIX. Topics for Study.

1. Baptism in the Holy Spirit.
2. The kingdom of God.
3. Prayer.
4. The lot.

XX. Words for Study.

1. Power. In R. V. Authority, Vide the Greek.
2. Witnesses.

XXI. Difficulties—Questions—Answers.

1. The meaning of kingdom of God.
2. The difference between the baptism of John and that of Jesus.
3. Is there any difference between ministry in v. 17, and ministry and apostleship in v. 25?
4. Did Peter act prematurely in proposing the selection of Matthias?
5. What, if any, use of the lot may we make?
6. Does the Holy Spirit as a guide take the place of the lot?
7. Was the prayer of vs. 24, 25 addressed to Jesus?

8. Who led in prayer? Verse 24.
9. How long did this prayer-meeting last?
1.
2. See Stiffler on Acts, p. 7.
3.
4. (a) Others acted, (b) space allotted to account large, (c) blessing poured out soon after, (d) Matthias included in 2: 14 and 6: 2.
5.
6.
7. The other apostles had been appointed by Jesus. But cf. 1: 24-26.
8.
9. Ten days—Jesus was on earth 40 days; Pentecost came on the 50th.

XXII. Remarks, Applications, Lessons, Illustrations.

1. Note the remarkable statement in v. 2 about Jesus and the Holy Spirit.
2. Note the prominence of the Holy Spirit in this chapter. This is true of the whole book of Acts.
3. "All" of verse 1 does not mean literally everything. Allow for the rhetorical element in Scripture.
4. Compare the beginning and ending of Acts.
5. Note the mention of Jesus' brethren in verse 14. Cf. John 7: 3.
6. The last sight of Mary, the mother of Jesus, which we get in the Bible is here, when she is on her knees a worshiper, and not one who is adored. See verse 14.
7. Peter quotes here from two of the so-called Imprecatory Psalms.
8. Judas went to his own place. Every one gravitates morally.

XXIII. Miscellaneous Points.

XXIV. Results of Study.

1. Respecting belief.
   a. Emphasis of the importance of the resurrection, ascension and return of Jesus.
   b. Confirmation of faith in general.
2. Respecting practise. Determination to trust more unreservedly in God.

Remarks on Outline for Chapter Study

1. Busy people may use it. It suggests a definite line of work. If you have but fifteen minutes each day you will know exactly where to begin and what to do. Definiteness in Bible study, and the habit of recording in an orderly manner results of study, are much needed by many.
2. Record past experience and present knowledge before examining the material. These topics may simply emphasize knowledge of ignorance. To do this may be well. It may stimulate to exertion.
3. The best text should be the verse of the chapter which above all others you would memorize.
4. The key verse should be the one which when read will most clearly and fully suggest the situation presented in the chapter as a whole.
5. The five facts should be selected from the chapter as a whole in order. They should not be crowded into any particular part of the chapter.
6. Only the most important variations of the R. V. from the A. V. need be noted.
7. Only the most important parallel passages need be cited. When quotations are made the original should be compared.
8. In the condensation, crowd the thought of the chapter into the smallest number of words possible.
9. As you write down the names of persons and places, when any doubt exists about the pronunciation, examine a pronouncing dictionary and fix in mind the proper pronunciation. As far as you may find time, study the personal history and character of each person named.
10. Do not fail to refer to map for location of places not well known.
11. Do not omit to record results of study.

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